

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

IN THE MATTER OF)	
)	
LIFELINE AND LINKUP REFORM)	WC DOCKET NO. 11-42
AND MODERNIZATION)	
)	
FEDERAL-STATE JOINT BOARD ON)	CC DOCKET NO. 96-45
UNIVERSAL SERVICE)	
)	
LIFELINE AND LINK UP)	WC DOCKET NO. 03-109
)	
ADVANCING BROADBAND)	
AVAILABILITY THROUGH DIGITAL)	WC DOCKET NO. 12-23
LITERACY TRAINING)	

**REPLY COMMENTS OF YOURTEL AMERICA, INC.
IN RESPONSE TO THE TRACFONE WIRELESS PETITION TO REQUIRE RETENTION OF
LIFELINE PROGRAM-BASED ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTATION**

Introduction

YourTel America, Inc. (“YourTel” or “Company”), respectfully submits these Comments in response to TracFone Wireless’ (“TracFone”) Petition filed in the dockets listed above on May 30, 2012. TracFone’s Petition requested that the Federal Communications Commission (“Commission”) revise its rules to require all eligible telecommunications carriers (“ETCs”) to retain a copy of the underlying documentation used to determine program-based Lifeline eligibility for at least three years following the receipt of such documentation.

Background

YourTel is a telecommunications carrier that provides affordable local and long distance services to low-income customers in seven states. YourTel has been designated as a Lifeline

wireline ETC by the public utility commissions in Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Illinois and a Lifeline wireless ETC in Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Illinois, Rhode Island, Maine and Pennsylvania. YourTel has been, and continues to be, an active participant in the USF low-income Lifeline program since 2003 and has been serving low-income consumers since 1995. YourTel is thus well positioned to provide experienced comment on the issue brought forth by TracFone.

Comments

YourTel has long supported the retention of proof documentation as part of the Lifeline applicant eligibility process. YourTel therefore agrees with TracFone's position that during this interim period (until a national eligibility database can be successfully implemented) the Commission should regard the retention of proof documentation as an improvement to the overall Lifeline enrollment procedure. While privacy concerns are an important part of this discussion, and practical and secure steps should be required to ensure the confidence of consumers, the continued prevention of waste, fraud and abuse of Universal Service Funds is of paramount importance as failure to do everything in our collective power to root out waste, fraud and abuse threatens the integrity and long term viability of the program and in turn the overall future of accessible communications for low income consumers.

While the Commission has done an outstanding job of updating the rules and regulations of the Lifeline program, oversight of the reformed program can only benefit from additional clarity of the rules and measurable accountability, particularly when it comes to the item of proof documentation. However, YourTel's concern in this discussion is twofold. First, what constitutes proof is a changing variable. Second, it is a challenge for all carriers who serve multiple jurisdictions to manage numerous programs administered by a web of state and federal agencies.

This wide and dynamic variety can create additional customer confusion as to what type of document is required, which in turn can lead to a lack of customer Lifeline sign ups, clearly not what the Commission intended.¹ YourTel also agrees with Nexus’ and the Joint Commenter’s comments that retention of documentation would eliminate the current manual and prone to error process of having to record a suggested variety of proof documentation data, however YourTel does not agree that a state database should be an optional process where it exists.

It is true that USAC has provided a good starting guide for carriers with the publication of its Program Eligibility website², but there still exists the opportunity to develop this resource into a full library of examples. Additionally, using such terms as “recommended” in its direction can lead to interpretation by the carrier and by auditors. A lack of a definitive, illustrative guideline means difficulty for carriers in demonstrating compliance. A clear reference, such as the one YourTel suggests below, can serve as the common “go to” reference for carriers and auditors, eliminating any possible conflicting views as to what determines proof in a particular jurisdiction.

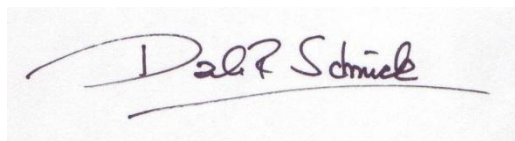
YourTel proposes that a firm date be established for a rule requiring retention of program documentation to go into effect and suggests that this date be established in such a manner so as to give carriers and states ample time for education and training of their employees. In preparation for that date, YourTel recommends that a collaborative team of carrier representatives, regulators and USAC be tasked with collecting and distributing examples of proof documentation for all states, the results of which would create a Lifeline Proof Documentation Guidebook (“LPDG”) that would be made available for both carriers and

¹ See <http://www.wctv.tv/home/headlines/Better-Security-With-New-EBT-Cards-164687626.html> for an example of changing documentation.

² <http://www.usac.org/li/telecom-carriers/step06/program-eligibility.aspx>

consumers. This working group would also assume the responsibility of updating, maintaining and communicating to a designated Lifeline Point of Contact ("LPOC") from every ETC the LPDG until such time that national eligibility database has come to fruition as the Commission has envisioned.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Dale Schmick", with a horizontal line underneath the name.

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Dated: August 8, 2012